



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

## Journal of English for Academic Purposes

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/jeap](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/jeap)

# Genre-based revising strategies of graduate students in applied linguistics: Insights from term papers

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## ARTICLE INFO

### Article history:

Received 25 November 2019

Received in revised form 2 November 2020

Accepted 3 November 2020

Available online 6 November 2020

### Keywords:

English for research Publication purposes

Genre

Graduate students

Revision strategy

Term paper

## ABSTRACT

The need for genre literacy is increasingly becoming evident in academic writing courses, particularly in the realm of research article (RA) writing. This paper documents RA genre-literacy informed revisions English as an Additional Language (EAL) graduate students applied to improve their term-paper assignments in the form of RAs following their participation in a series of genre-based research paper writing workshops in Applied Linguistics. Drawing upon insights from the revision strategy frameworks of Allal and Chanquoy (2003) and Willey and Tanimoto (2012), we developed a six-category taxonomy consisting of *addition*, *deletion*, *reformulation*, *substitution*, *translocation*, and *expansion* genre-based revision strategies. Using the prevailing genre-based frameworks, we compared the earlier and revised drafts of twelve RAs composed by Iranian graduate students to account for the strategies they employed to redraft each section of papers in terms of move-step realization. This study found that *expansion*, *reformulation*, and *addition* were the most commonly used genre-based revision strategies. In addition, the findings revealed that moves in *introduction* and *discussion* sections included the highest number of genre-based revisions. Through introducing genre-oriented RA revision strategies, this study calls for further attempts to promote the integration of genre literacy into English for Research Publication Purposes courses.

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## 1. Introduction

Due to a growing pressure to publish research findings in English, English for research publication purposes (ERPP) is becoming an independent field in research and education. The emergence of an academic journal (*Journal of English for Research Publication Purposes*, John Benjamins Publishing) is proof of the popularity and importance of ERPP. The dominance of English as the main language of scholarly publishing has complicated the issue. In recent years, publishing in credible English-medium journals has gained considerable importance among scholars of different fields, which stands out as being more significant for English as an Additional Language (EAL) researchers (Giraldo, 2019; Mur Duenas, 2012). In fact, EAL scholars need to not only meet the requirements set by educational milieus but also to catch up with their native counterparts in terms of publication in high-impact English language journals.

It has been well-documented that EAL writers go through a number of diverse challenges on their odysseys to scholarly publication (Belcher, 2007; Flowerdew, 2019; Flowerdew & Wang, 2016; Huang, 2010; Salager-Meyer, 2008). EAL writers'

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knowledge of what content to include and how to order and shape it in different sections of a research article (RA) appears to be among the serious challenges. In this respect, a line of support is the concept of literacy brokers, which has helped EAL authors to reshape and improve their texts through having experts in scholarly writing edit their texts in terms of content to a lesser extent and language to a greater extent (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016; Lillis & Curry, 2006). In the same vein, another group of researchers have probed into finding ways to assist EAL authors to refine and improve their papers on their own. For instance, there has been a vast body of research on how to assist EAL writers improve their linguistic knowledge to develop more native-like texts (Cargill & O'Connor, 2006; Daly, 2016; Lillis, Magyar, & Robinson-Pant, 2010).

While there have been considerable attempts to help academic writers improve their papers linguistically, a genre-based perspective is missing in this line of support. Despite the growing knowledge and exploration of genre aspects of RA writing, such a huge body of valuable knowledge needs to be put into pedagogical practices and analysis. A well-known strand in this respect includes credible genre-based frameworks introduced by prominent scholars to offer move-based suggestions to researchers. This is to familiarize them with the genre of scholarly writing through providing relevant organizations and rhetorical structures for each section of an RA (Phuong Dzung, 2008b; Swales, 1990, 2004). For instance, the Creating A Research Space (CARS) model, suggested by Swales (1990, 2004), is one of the most well-known genre-oriented frameworks to help researchers develop a satisfactory introduction section. In addition, a significant share of the most credible journals in Applied Linguistics such as *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, and *Written Communication* among others has been devoted to the coverage of genre-specific features of RAs.

Despite this outstanding empirical coverage of the topic, there have been very few attempts to explicitly implement the pedagogy of genre literature in instructional settings. Most studies have descriptively and heuristically delved into the nature of RAs to verify the previously mentioned genre-based frameworks. In addition, the translation of this growing body of knowledge into pedagogical activities is fairly well-researched with foci being mainly on thesis/proposal writing and particular types of writing tasks such as mind maps in academic writing (Wang, 2017; Wette, 2017). More importantly, though not necessarily genre-oriented, numerous manuals on how to write research papers are available for novice and less experienced writers (Bailey, 2015; Hubbuch, 2005; Turabian, 2018, 2019). Yet, in terms of genre-based elements, there are hardly any attempts to develop and directly implement accessible and thorough instructional academic writing materials in curriculum and syllabus design, particularly in the case of RAs.

As part of a larger study on the translation of the available genre-based RA writing literature into pedagogical materials and tasks and their implementation in an RA writing course, the present study provides an account of genre-based revision strategies graduate students in Applied Linguistics employed to redraft their RA-formatted term papers.

## 2. Genre-based revising strategies

This study concerns revision of RAs through the lenses of genre. Scholarly publication is a demanding and intricate process involving several stages and does not seem to be attainable through a single draft. This process can include different forms of rewriting or revising before publication (Belcher, 2007). In fact, in order to better equip prospective authors with the genre-oriented knowledge in instructional contexts, it would be helpful to teach them how to redraft and revise RAs on their way to scholarly publication.

Revision in writing has been conceptualized differently in the literature. The most well-known definition was provided by Fitzgerald (1987), who saw revision as making major or minor modifications when writing texts. More recently, deeper and rather different interpretations of revision have been introduced, which offer cognitive accounts of revision relating it to the potentials of working memory (Hayes, 2012; Macaro, 2006). In cognitive terms, to revise adequately requires simultaneous use of a diverse number of strategies in the writing process. In this respect, successful revision is highly interrelated with strategy use in writing. Referring to the highlighted role of strategy use in academic writing, Flower, Hayes, Carey, Schriver, and Stratman (1986) acknowledged that "writing is strategic action during which writers employ different strategies to juggle with constraints of writing" (p. 44). In fact, revision strategies assist authors to deal with difficulties in writing (Wong, 2005).

On the one hand, revision in academic writing has been well-researched in the literature, particularly under the guise of text shapers (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003), literacy brokers (Lillis & Curry, 2006; Luo & Hyland, 2016), and convenience editors (Willey & Tanimoto, 2012, 2013; Zeinolabedini & Gholami, 2016). The common element among these works is obviously their focus on changes or strategies in lieu of the author(s) themselves, and EAL authors' self-revising strategies has been relatively meagre in the literature. On the other hand, although strategy use in the writing process itself has been a well-researched area (Gopee & Deane, 2013; Jackson, 2009; Murray, 1978), the specific strategies the revision process requires has not been comprehensively examined. In this vein, the only related framework was offered by Allal and Chanquoy (2003) who suggested that revision in writing encompasses the use of several strategies and sub-strategies. Based on their framework, strategies are categorized into two main types, namely *editing* and *rewriting*. The former is a matter of modifying texts without making any changes in the original content to sufficiently refine the quality of the text. In contrast, the latter involves authors enriching their texts through making considerable changes in both content and original meaning. This involves *transformations of texts* including *addition and deletion*, *changes in the text organization* such as *sequencing*, and *modifications on meaning*. A deeper look into this framework reveals that it can be a rich source of help for academic authors in terms of micro and macro language-based revising strategies.

**Table 1**  
Genre-based frameworks in Applied Linguistics RAs.

RA section	Genre-based framework
Abstract	Swales and Feak (2009): Background/Situation Presenting Research/Purpose Method/Procedure Findings/Results Recommendations/Implications
Introduction	Swales and Feak's (2004) CARS model: Establishing a territory <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making a centrality claim</li> <li>• Making topic generalizations</li> </ul> Reviewing items of previous research <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishing a niche</li> <li>• Counter claiming</li> <li>• Indicating a gap</li> <li>• Raising a question</li> <li>• Continuing a tradition</li> </ul> Occupying the niche <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting present research</li> <li>• Presenting research questions</li> </ul>
Method	Phuong Dzung (2008b): Data collection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sample</li> <li>• Instruments</li> <li>• Justifying data</li> <li>• Collection procedure</li> </ul> Describing data analysis Recounting data analysis procedures
Results	Phuong Dzung (2008b): Preparing for presenting results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restating data collection and analysis</li> </ul> Reporting specific results Commenting on specific results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpreting specific results</li> </ul>
Discussion	Swales (1990): Background information Statement of results (Un)expected results Reference to previous research Explanation Exemplification Deduction and hypothesis Recommendation

As for the RA genre, the literature provides convincing evidence on the importance of genre aspects in academic writing, particularly in research paper writing. As summarized in Table 1, the main part of this evidence is related to genre-oriented frameworks which provide move/step-based guidance in terms of organization and rhetorical structures of RAs.

Moreover, the literature on revision in academic writing shows a plethora of research on language-oriented changes in RAs, mainly made by individuals or parties other than authors themselves. While drawing upon the orthodox tradition of research on revision strategy use in RA writing, the current paper adopted a genre perspective on revision with the aim of heuristically investigating whether such language-based revisions could also serve genre-oriented functions. Despite a mounting body of research on genre-based features of RAs, genre-focused literacy and its instruction in academic writing programs for graduate students have not received adequate attention and coverage. However, if writers, particularly novice RA writers such as graduate students, possess an acceptable level of genre literacy in RA writing and learn how to implement it in redrafting or revising their academic texts, such know-how could certainly boost the publishability of their manuscripts. Through linking it to RA revision strategies, this paper is an attempt to raise RA genre-specific knowledge among academic writers. To this end, we developed and implemented a strategy taxonomy consisting of genre-based revisions of graduate students on their term papers following their participation in an academic writing course on genre-oriented features of RAs. The following research questions guided the present study:

1. What genre-based revision strategies do graduate students most frequently use in revising their term papers following their participation in a genre-based research article writing program in Applied Linguistics?

2. In which sections of the term papers do graduate students make more genre-based revisions?
3. What justifications do graduate students provide for genre-based revisions of their term papers?

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Context of the study and participants

The participating authors in our study included a pool of MA students in Applied Linguistics. The MA programs in Iran are not solely designed for professional development of the participants in terms of teaching careers. Rather, a coursework plus thesis format dominates these programs. As regards the coursework, students participate in academic courses either in the strand of becoming a more professional teacher in courses such as Teaching Methodology, Methods of Teaching Language Skills, and Practicum or in the domain of performing or reporting a research experiment in courses such as Writing Academic Texts, Research Methodology, Seminar in Language Teaching Issues, and Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods in Language Teaching. It is noteworthy that there are some other courses such as English for Specific Purposes, Introduction to Discourse Analysis, and Language Testing and Assessment lying between these two strands (Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, 2016). In some of these courses, students are required to conduct small-scale studies and hand in term papers in the format of typical RAs. In addition to those research projects, students are also encouraged to co-author and publish a well-grounded research paper out of their theses in collaboration with their supervisors. Any acceptance letter from a credible journal or published RA and even a conference presentation based on one's thesis project in the MA program are credited with certain scores in the viva session by the examining committee. Moreover, as is the case in the rest of the world, published papers are considered a plus point for admission into PhD programs in Applied Linguistics in Iranian universities. Thus, graduate students need to author publishable papers in order to meet the requirements of university courses, graduation, and admission to a higher program and even raise their prospect for employment quite in line with the universal trend of 'publish and flourish' (Gray, Madson, & Jackson, 2018).

Given this context of our study and in line with Tardy (2009) who underscored the need for developing a working mastery of genre literacy, particularly formal type of genre knowledge including the rhetoric and move features of RAs in order to craft scholarly written manuscripts, we decided to run a *Genre-based RA Writing Program* for a group of highly motivated MA students. The participants had already finished the first two semesters of their MA courses and expressed their interest in participating in this optional program with the incentive of improving their RA writing potentials and the publishability of their papers. According to the national syllabi and course description provided by (Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, 2016) in Iran, in the academic writing course named *Writing Academic Texts*, how to craft scholarly written RAs is not stated among the course objectives. Besides, according to authors' experience and the review of the course syllabi of a number of universities offering this course in Iran and the participating students' experiences, such courses heavily focus on non-genre features of proposal/thesis writing, namely topic selection, formation of research questions, design and procedure, APA style, citation, and paragraph development such as coherence and cohesion. In these courses, there is little room for the coverage of genre-oriented aspects of RA writing and their specific linguistic embodiments. This particular lack of genre-based attention to RA organization in academic writing classes acted as an impetus for graduate students to express their interest in joining our genre-based program.

The following criteria for inclusion as the participants in this study were observed. The target population was MA students in Applied Linguistics who were roughly at an advanced level in terms of their general English proficiency with a good disciplinary knowledge of English language teaching as they met both types of the requirements in the nation-wide qualifying exam for admission into the MA program in Iran. Out of this population, those who had already completed two or three semesters of the MA program (at least 16 credits out of 24) were invited to act as the target participants in our study. Our third and pivotal screening factor was the completion and crafting of one or two term projects in the format of RAs as course assignments for the already taken MA courses, and, more importantly, the willingness to refine them further for possible publication purposes. Moreover, the participants were briefed that the course was solely to concentrate on integrating the existing body of the genre-based literature into RA writing, and those who expressed their interest in taking such a course on a voluntary basis were invited to enroll in it. Based on these criteria, we set out the course for 20 MA students in Applied Linguistics.

#### 3.2. Genre-based RA writing program and corpus

Before building the corpus of the study to be explained later, we developed and implemented a genre-based research article writing course. To set up this course, the researchers conducted an in-depth review of the literature on genre-based studies in Applied Linguistics, and accordingly developed pedagogical genre-specific RA writing materials and activities which proceeded from knowledge transmission and awareness-raising to guided activities and tasks on genre-based features of RA writing as envisaged by McGrath (1997). The first researcher was assigned to run the course while regular meetings were held among the authors on the course and how to deliver it.

Throughout our program, graduate students were exposed to genre-specific features of RA writing (e.g., moves and steps for each section of RAs and the relevant lexical bundles to realize those moves) in Applied Linguistics which were extracted and tailored consulting prominent frameworks in the field of genre analysis (see Table 1). Later on, we also used these frameworks to separately extract genre-oriented strategies for each section.

In our program, all sections of a typical RA within the Introduction-Method-Results, and Discussion (IMRD) structure (Swales, 1990) as well as abstract were dealt with. Totally, ten sessions were systematically held on writing and refining main components of a research paper. With reference to the difficulty level, length, range, and scope of the pedagogical class- and home-based activities tailored for each respective RA section, we allocated two sessions on average for each RA section, while addressing abstracts and discussions in one and three sessions, respectively.

The content of each session included genre-specific knowledge of move/step features of the sections together with their relevant lexical bundles, which was transmitted to participants through a number of handouts and tasks. The handouts included the genre-oriented frameworks and their linguistic features, and the tasks consisted of both recognition (e.g., *labeling* or *ordering the moves or steps*) and production (e.g., *writing the missing moves or steps*) tasks as the realizations and practices of the handouts. After each respective session on RA sections, we asked the participants to revise the section of the earlier drafts of their term papers.

The corpus was selected based on the availability of earlier and revised drafts of the papers, and whether the students granted permission to use the data for our study. The earlier drafts were already crafted as course completion requirements in the respective MA program. The course instructors of the MA program had already provided guidance on selecting the appropriate topics and offered varying degrees of advisory support on how to conduct those research studies. These graduate students carried out the research projects and devised reports in an RA format and submitted them for evaluation and scoring by the instructors along with other course requirements. Following their participation in the genre-based RA writing program, students were asked to revise one of those term papers (which they believed was more satisfactory in terms of content and originality and had the potential for publication after further genre-based refinement).

After the revision process, 12 research reports in the format of RAs were selected to form a small specialized corpus. In order to ensure consistency in selecting the corpus, we adhered to IMRD structure (Swales, 1990) in selecting the papers. In total, we received 20 papers from graduate students and identified a pool of 12 papers for analysis based on the above-mentioned criteria. The papers ranged in word length from 2351 to 6757 ( $M = 3856.7$ ) and included a wide range of topics such as language teaching methodology, technology and language teaching, higher education, and even genre analysis.

### 3.3. Data coding and procedure

In this study, we were particularly interested in developing a genre-oriented taxonomy which systematically elaborates on the revisions authors make on their research papers, based on the insights from the literature. Hence, we consulted two previously established frameworks for revision strategies in academic writing. The first was offered by Allal and Chanquoy (2003) who categorized revision into *editing* and *rewriting* elements (already discussed in the introduction). In addition, we drew insights from Willey and Tanimoto's (2012) model for convenience editing strategies. Based on their framework, editing strategies are divided into *micro-* and *macro-strategies*. Micro changes consist of *addition*, *deletion*, *substitution*, and *mechanical modifications*. In contrast, macro-strategies are composed of *rewriting*, *recombining*, and *reordering*.

Consulting the two frameworks, we extended and generalized their categories into a more genre-based model to encapsulate what move/step changes writers make in revising their papers. We piloted the two frameworks on the data and conducted a pre-coding of the texts. Based on the initial coding, we developed a descriptive coding scheme which included move/step genre-based revising strategies along with their operational definitions. The initial scheme consisted of five categories based on the above-mentioned frameworks, namely *addition*, *deletion*, *reformulation*, *substitution*, and *translocation*. One more strategy labelled as *expansion* emerged from the data in the pre-coding phase. At this point, we need to acknowledge that all the categories in our taxonomy could involve surface-level changes since moves are considered as embodiments of linguistic features such as lexical bundles (Abdollahpour & Gholami, 2019). In this paper, the strategies leading to extensive changes in the relevant moves were considered for analysis. The final version of the coding scheme and sample codification of genre-based revising strategies are depicted in Table 2.

This study examined all sections of a typical RA, namely abstract, introduction, method, results, and discussion in terms of genre-oriented revising strategies. As Table 2 shows, the strategies are entitled under the term "move". This necessitates the use of move/step frameworks in order to identify the strategies used in each specific move. Based on a thorough review of the literature in the realm of RA genre analysis, we drew upon the most prominent and frequently researched genre-based frameworks already listed in the review section (see Table 1) as the guides for analyzing each section of papers. We adopted a descriptive and non-evaluative approach in accounting for genre-based revision changes in different parts of the texts and do not make any judgments on the revised versions of the papers in terms of their quality and whether such changes improved rhetorical features of the papers.

After determining the genre-based revision strategies and in light of the move classification frameworks, we analyzed and coded the earlier and revised drafts of the papers. Using the 'compare command' in Microsoft Word, we placed both versions into adjacent screens on the same file for comparison. Then, we marked and coded the strategies on the revised versions of the texts. In line with the objectives of the study, only move/step-based changes in the revised versions of the manuscripts were taken into consideration, and other surface-level changes were left unaccounted for. Examples of non-move changes



**Table 2**  
Genre-oriented revision strategy taxonomy with examples.

Strategies	Description and instances
Move addition	Adding a new move or sub-move <b>Original:</b> However, in terms of two of the distinct components of academic conflict, namely opposed claim and conflict resolution, non-native English papers were superior to their native counterparts. <b>Redrafted:</b> .... <b>This study calls for more incorporation of genre-oriented concepts such as academic conflict into academic writing instruction in order to make it as meaningful and authentic as possible.</b>
Move deletion	Deleting a move or sub-move <b>Original:</b> A questionnaire comprised of three parts for measuring learners' motivation and factors from schools and institutes' courses that may participate in motivating or demotivating them was administered to obtain data from 73 EFL students who were experienced both school and institute's courses and are still learning English. <b>Redrafted:</b> In order to conduct the study data obtained from 73 EFL students who were experienced in both school and institute's courses and are still learning English.
Move reformulation	Keeping the move/sub-move but rewriting it using new set of words or sentences, which leads to a thorough reformation of the move <b>Original:</b> This paper is aimed at discovering the implementation of Hunston's (1993) <sup>1</sup> conceptualization of academic conflict and its components by native and non-native writers. <b>Redrafted:</b> <b>The present article implements Hunston's (1993) conceptualization of academic conflict by native and non-native writers when composing the discussion section of papers written in their L1 and L2.</b>
Move substitution	Replacing the move/sub-move with another move/sub-move <b>Original:</b> One important genre category within the natural and social sciences is the experimental report (Kuhn, 1996). One of the critical tasks of an academic or scientific writer in such a report is the ability to evaluate previous claims by scholars .... <b>Redrafted:</b> <b>Writing is a multidimensional activity, and any writing practice should be viewed within its historical, social, and epistemological context. Scientific writing, as a socially and culturally loaded event, is no exception...</b>
Move translocation	Changing the position of the move/sub-move in the text (e.g. taking one move/sub-move from the middle of a section to the beginning) <b>Original:</b> An abstract which is the summary of research report, article, or dissertation, in academic writing genres has always been in the focus of academic researchers ... <b>The abstract is the last part written in research article, and the first element that is read so it is the key element in persuading the reader to go on further reading the rest of the article. Hence, it should be able to attract the reader. Primarily accurate, self-curtained, concise, and specific, non-evaluative, and coherent and readability are the essential characteristics of a good abstract...</b> <b>Redrafted:</b> <b>Although the abstract is the last part written in a research article, it is the first element different audiences read which persuades them to keep reading the rest of the article. Hence, an abstract should be sufficiently informative, comprehensive, and appealing in order to attract the reader. Primarily, accuracy, self-curtainedness, conciseness, and specificity, non-evaluativeness, coherence, and readability are the essential characteristics of a good abstract</b> (American Psychological Association, 2010). Abstract section, as the summary of a research report, article, or dissertation, in academic writing genres, has frequently attracted academic researchers' attention...
Move expansion	Without any rewriting, adding more text to the pre-existing move/sub-move (Original content + Additional content) <b>Original:</b> Among the significant tasks faced by academic writers are establishing their expertise in negotiating their new research findings, and resolving tensions between current knowledge and previous claims. <b>Redrafted:</b> Among the significant tasks faced by academic writers are establishing their expertise in negotiating their new research findings, and resolving tensions between current knowledge and previous claims. <b>These little-explored areas contrast with the attention devoted to examining basic moves and steps in different parts of research articles.</b>

included word choice, sentence reformulation and rewriting, grammatical corrections, and mechanical changes such as punctuation and spelling. Some of these language-oriented changes may have been used to realize or revise a specific move and sub-move. For example, in some cases, sentence reformulation led to the replacement of one move with another, and we considered it as a genre-based revision strategy. It should be noticed that some move-based changes contained the use of more than one strategy such as both expansion and reformulation. In such cases, we considered both strategies for that move. To ascertain inter-coder reliability of the coding scheme, all marked move changes were shown to another rater (a field specialist and academic writing instructor with a good record of publications in Applied Linguistics). In doing so, we highlighted the changes and asked the second rater to code according to our strategy taxonomy after some briefing and joint coding practice of the three paper sections including abstract, method, and discussion. The inter-coder reliability was found to be 94.5%. In addition to qualitative content analysis, the data were analyzed using frequencies and percentages. Moreover, as a follow-up, we conveniently conducted stimulated recall interviews with three of the authors to elicit their reflections and recollections on the revisions they applied on their own term papers at the end of the course with the purpose of shedding further light on the issue. Stimulated recalls aimed to elicit further information on the possible reasons for the varying extents and types of genre-based revisions from the participants. In response to the third research question of the study, we provide a select number of interview extracts of students' value-laden comments in the results to corroborate the qualitative and quantitative findings of the corpus analyses.

#### 4. Results

This study primarily aimed to describe genre-oriented strategies graduate students employed to revise the early drafts of their term papers. Fig. 1 depicts the overall proportion of the genre-based strategies in the corpus based on our six-category taxonomy.

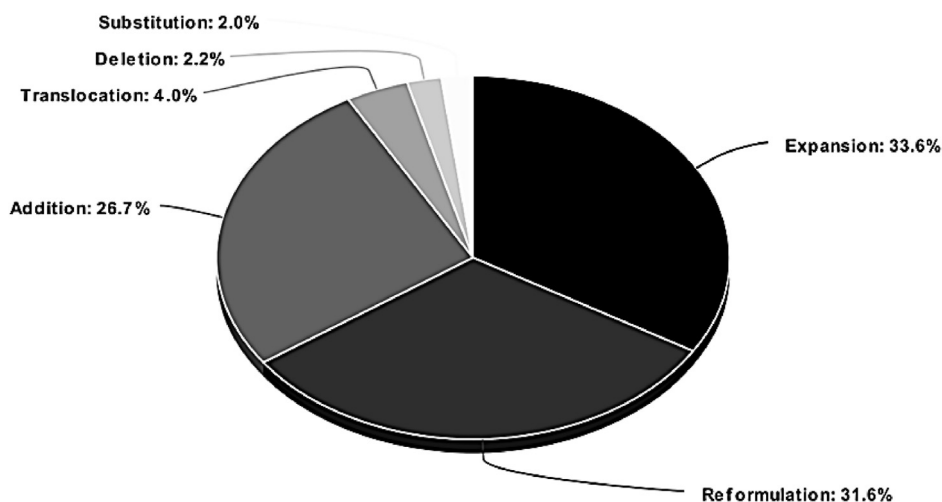


Fig. 1. General distribution of genre-based self-revising strategies.

Generally speaking, we found that expansion, reformulation, and addition were the most commonly used genre-based strategies by graduate students to redraft their research papers. Below, we depict the samples of each genre-based strategy in different sections of the term papers. Using percentages, we discuss the proportion of each strategy use vis-à-vis paper sections. Moreover, as for the third question of the study, graduate students were asked to deliberate on their genre-based revision practices retrospectively, and their views are described after reporting the corresponding corpus-based findings.

#### 4.1. Addition

Addition constituted adding a move or sub-move in the revised text. Extract 1 shows the addition of *implications* move in the abstract.

##### 4.1.1. Extract (1)

Original: *The results of analyses revealed that the courses offered by institutes led to motivation of the students toward learning English, while no relationship was observed between courses offered by schools and motivation to learn English.*

Redrafted: *The Pearson Correlation Coefficient demonstrated a significant relationship between the courses offered by private language schools in motivating the students toward learning English. The analysis also revealed no significant relationship between courses offered by public schools and motivation to learn English. **The paper discusses further findings and implications for language pedagogy.***

According to our quantitative analysis, addition was the third most commonly used change by the authors (Fig. 1). The following interview extract echoes one of the common justifications for the use of *addition* strategy:

A) '... well, I didn't have a clear format of research in my mind. In this course, I learned many things about writing research papers. In case of abstracts, I did not know that we could also write about background or recommendations. So, I happily added these parts to my abstract ... (An MA student responded when she was asked about the reason for the addition of the *background* and *recommendation* moves in abstract)

Based on more detailed quantitative analysis, the discussion section (60%) was more prominent in terms of addition strategy. This held commonly true in case of the *background*, *explanation*, and *exemplification* moves. The abstract (28%) and introduction (29%) sections also included a good number of addition changes, which were frequently applied in the *recommendation/implication* and *background* moves (abstract) and the *making centrality claims* and *making topic generalizations* steps (introduction). We should note that the method section ranked the last in this respect.

#### 4.2. Deletion

Referring back to Table 2, we define deletion as the act of removing a specific move or step in any section of RAs. For instance, in extract 2, the deletion of the *instruments* step in the method section from the *sample* sub-section is illustrated via a strikethrough. Instead, the author has elaborated the *sample* step, which we considered as an instance of expansion strategy later in our analysis.

#### 4.2.1. Extract (2)

Original: *The study employed semi-structured and focus group interviews in order to get a holistic and clear picture of the challenges PhD candidates dealt with. In fact, Semi-structured interviews allowed the participants' thoughts, feelings and experiences to emerge and drive the interview. The participants of this study comprise almost seventy male/female PhD students majoring in TEFL at different Iranian universities. Their selection was based on purposeful sampling as well as their willingness and availability.*

Redrafted: *The participants of this study comprise almost seventy male/female PhD students majoring in TEFL at different Iranian universities. Their selection was based on purposeful sampling as well as their willingness and availability. **Moreover, the sample encompassed the first, second, third, and fourth year candidates along with graduate students.***

Further quantitative analysis revealed that the discussion section (72%) included the most commonly deleted moves and steps. However, the abstract and introduction sections interestingly included no instances of *deletion* changes.

### 4.3. Reformulation

Rewriting the existing moves in a substantial manner is coined as the reformulation strategy in this paper. Reformulation is perhaps the trickiest strategy as it involves making changes to the existing moves in an RA section. In this paper, we took into account the changes leading to a thorough reformation of a specific move, which were well beyond surface level changes. Extract 3 shows a complete reformulation of the *occupying the niche* move in the introduction section. One should note that this type of change led to substantial modifications in the content of the move, which persuaded us to consider it as a genre-specific reformulation. Otherwise, it would seem like a simple rewording or paraphrasing at a surface level.

#### 4.3.1. Extract (3)

Original: *In order to bridge the gaps mentioned above, drawing on Hunston's (1993) framework, the present study is an attempt to compare L1 Persian writers and L2 English writers with respect to the differences in using academic conflict in the discussion section of Applied Linguistic RAs. Additionally, this study provides an internal analysis among L1 Persian writers' community and their written texts in Persian and English with regard to the amount of academic conflict use in the discussion part. This is the main novelty the present study calls for in order to paint a different picture of how academic conflict is being utilized in different as well as same language systems.*

Redrafted: *The present paper draws on Hunston's (1993) framework, which interprets AC as a situation that requires authors to justify the value of their new knowledge when it is in sharp contrast with previous claims. In order to address the issues noted in the preceding paragraph, the present study sets out to compare native and non-native English writers in terms of their negotiation of AC and its components in the discussion section of Applied Linguistics papers. Additionally, this study provides a close examination and analysis of Iranian writers' texts written in Persian and English with regard to the use of AC in the discussion section of RAs.*

Reformulation was found to be the second frequently employed genre-based strategy in the revisions. Interesting grounds were put forward by student writers in terms of reformulation changes. We provide the relevant interview extract in the subsection on expansion strategy. We further found that the discussion (50%) and introduction (40%) sections stood out in terms of reformulation changes. Authors mainly used these modifications in redrafting the *reference to previous research, explanation, making a centrality claim, making topic generalizations, and indicating a gap* moves and steps.

### 4.4. Substitution

Substitution refers to replacing a move with another. In our study, we could not discover frequent instance of substitution strategy. Extract 4 is one of those rarest instances where the *previous research items* step is substituted with *making a centrality claim* step in the introduction section.

#### 4.4.1. Extract (4)

Original: *There is plentiful support suggested by the previous research that acknowledges those transition complications postgraduate students confront. A good amount of research has reported on the labyrinthine factors concerning higher education programs. Recently, several investigators have turned to individual aspects that served the leading roles in postgraduate students' academic success. It is noteworthy to mention that a majority of those studies have targeted international PhD students and the challenges they faced...*

Redrafted: *Transition to a higher education program appears to be a crucial phase in individuals' academic lives. This type of developmental change occurs along with numerous challenges for the graduate students. It is generally accepted that the incorporation of candidates' experiences may lead to satisfactory improvements within higher education programs which, in turn, results in productive academic outcomes.*

Confirming the qualitative part, our quantitative analysis similarly showed a rare use of substitution strategy by authors. A few cases were found in case of the *making centrality claim* and *explanation* moves of the introduction and discussion sections, respectively. Based on the interview data, writers found this change slightly challenging to apply. Extracts B and C reveal students' reasons for not using substitution strategy in RA revisions:



- B) ... it was hard for me to rethink what to write about. If I wanted to replace this with the other, I may have needed to write about other things. I preferred to extend this part of the introduction ... (An MA student when he was asked about the reason for not substituting the making a centrality claim sub-move with another one)
- C) ... you know I find introduction the hardest to write. When I finish writing it, I hardly touch the order. That's why I didn't want to make substitutions. Reformulating was a lot easier and more reasonable ... (An MA student when she was asked about the reason for not substituting the making a centrality claim sub-move with another one)

#### 4.5. Translocation

Perhaps, translocation is a newly used term in this study to define a genre-oriented strategy. Based on the data, we interpret this type of modification as changes in the position of a move within an RA. In the following excerpt, for instance, the *restatement of results* move in the middle of the discussion section was moved to the beginning paragraph.

##### 4.5.1. Extract (5)

Original: *Regarding appellate court, Chambliss and Sideman's (1981) thesis was that the process of appellate decision-making is primarily value-laden. They proposed a theoretical framework to analyse judicial reasoning (Lanza & Kaduce, 1982, p. 533) Moreover, Lanza & Kaduce (1982) clarified the appellate court decision process as ...*

... Discourse analysis of court decisions approve the basic rules of judgment; formality, neutrality and explicitness of judging. It may also be concluded that all the texts belong to the domain of law, though with some slight differences on the lexical level, are the same in the complexity of sentences, their normalization, and the use of passive, sentence length...

Redrafted: **The Discourse analysis of court decisions approved the basic rules of judgment; formality, neutrality and explicitness of judging. The results showed that all the texts belong to the domain of law, though with some slight differences on the lexical level, are the same in the complexity of sentences, their normalization, and the use of passive, sentence length...**

... Regarding appellate court, Chambliss and Sideman's (1981) thesis was that the process of appellate decision-making is primarily value-laden...

Quantitative results confirmed the prominence of the introduction (50%) and discussion (50%) sections in terms of translocation strategy. Although translocation did not stand out among the most commonly applied changes, it was found to be fairly used in the *making topic generalizations, referring to the previous research items, and explanation* moves and steps.

#### 4.6. Expansion

The final strategy that emerged from our data was termed as expansion, denoting that a move or sub-move could be more elaborate via being extended. Based on the findings, a good number of the authors extended the moves of some sections without making any changes to the previous parts or paragraphs. As an example, extract 6 clearly illustrates how the *instrumentation* move of the method section was expanded.

##### 4.6.1. Extract (6)

Original: *Family Friend's songs that had already set up on the class computer were played and practiced each session for Experimental group for about 15 min. Papers of the song lyrics were also prepared for control group. Different topics were reflected in the songs such as: animal, sport, food, environment, etc.*

Redrafted: *Family Friend's songs that had already set up on the class computer were played and practiced each session for Experimental group for about 15 min. Papers of the song lyrics were also prepared for control group. Different topics were reflected in the songs such as: animal, sport, food, environment etc. Furthermore, the lyrics had to be relatively compatible with the learners' English knowledge; hence, the chosen songs, for example, which had a lot of slangs or idioms, were discarded too.*

Expansion was the most frequently applied genre-based change in the RA revisions of graduate students. In the following interview extracts, the most commonly echoed motives of student writers for employing expansion and reformulation are presented:

- D) ... I have a limited experience of writing research texts. Sometimes, I don't even know what to write about or include for example in introduction or discussion. I wrote this term paper all on my own but I wasn't happy with it before your course. When I was writing this part, I thought that it's not good enough. Honestly, I was out of ideas. In this course, I learned that I can categorize the introduction into different compartments and write them step by step. I decided to rewrite this part and even make it a little bit longer ... (An MA student responded when he was asked about the reason for the reformulation and expansion of the *indicating the gap and making a centrality claims* steps of the introduction section)
- E) ... copy-paste things are not welcome in our university, especially at the end of course when we need to hand over term papers or submitting papers to conferences or journals. Honestly, I didn't want to be caught red-handed. The writing course was a good chance to reform some parts of introduction and even discussion to avoid possible penalties ... (An MA participant when he was asked about the reason for employing too many reformulation or expansion changes in the introduction and discussion sections)

The two sections of discussion (35%) and introduction (18%) contained the largest number of expansion strategies. This especially held true in the *explanation*, *commenting on the results*, and *indicating the gap* moves of those sections, respectively.

## 5. Discussion

Publishing research in English poses daunting challenges to academics, particularly (post)graduate students in non-Anglophone contexts. The major challenge lies in student writers' enormous attempts to meet the requirements set by educational settings with regard to their graduation and future careers. To achieve this, students need to revise drafts of their texts multiple times to better meet the expectations. In this study, through developing a six-category genre-based revision strategy taxonomy based on the literature and an initial data analysis, we provided a heuristic-descriptive account of the changes graduate student writers in Applied Linguistics made on their term papers following their participation in a series of genre-oriented RA writing workshops. The taxonomy consisted of six categories including *addition*, *deletion*, *reformulation*, *substitution*, *translocation*, and *expansion*. In order to provide a vivid picture of revision strategies in each section of papers, we drew on well-known genre-oriented frameworks with regard to the moves comprising each RA section.

The first objective of this study was to quantitatively and qualitatively account for genre-based revision strategies graduate students employ to redraft their term papers. We generally found that *expansion*, *reformulation*, and *addition* were the most commonly used genre-based revision strategies. Interestingly, the identified genre-oriented strategies resemble surface-level modifications in terms of types but of a very different nature. Previous studies on revision strategies in RA writing were mainly concerned with micro and macro changes at word and sentence/paragraph levels, respectively, and linguistically oriented revisions most often applied by professional editors (Bisaillon, 2007) or literacy brokers (Luo & Hyland, 2016; Willey & Tanimoto, 2012; Zeinolabedini & Gholami, 2016). Given this, our study provides a rather broader account of revising strategies in terms of genre-based aspects, such as addition, reformulation, and expansion of particular moves and steps in RA sections.

The analyses of the move-based revisions in the first place indicate that the participants developed a good understanding and functional appreciation of generic features of RAs in general, and the course presumably served them well. Drawing upon what they learned throughout this special course, they could utilize a host of disparate genre-oriented revision strategies with the purpose of optimizing the rhetorical organization of RA sections of their first drafts. Given the extent and variety of the changes, one could assume that student writers, prior to the course, might have developed an unclear picture of how to adhere to the expected moves and steps in each section of their papers. This was echoed by two of the interviewed participants who noted that they used to have a vague idea of moves, their sequencing, and how to embody them linguistically. After becoming aware of genre-based aspects, students either added missing moves (Extract A) and steps to different sections or reformulated and extended the existing moves (Extract D).

In wider terms, to the best of our knowledge and experience, in most non-English speaking countries such as Iran, revision practices of graduate students are not informed by genre-based features of RAs. This could culminate in a sort of what we call *genre illiteracy* which could turn RA writing into a formidable enterprise for graduate student writers (Wette, 2017).

As for the different distribution of strategies, *expansion*, *reformulation*, and *addition* were the most commonly used genre-based revision strategies. On the other hand, this study surprisingly found *substitution* as the least frequent genre-based revision strategy among EAL student writers. A further possibility is that the authors might find those three changes less demanding to apply compared to other strategies such as *substitution*. For instance, with respect to *reformulation*, in line with our findings, Cuenca and Bach (2007) have already considered *reformulation* as an umbrella term for other changes and argued that English academic writers typically use reformulation to add more text or expand what is already written. This study found *expansion* as a genre-based revision strategy, not previously accounted for in non-genre-based revision categorizations, and thus the findings of previous studies dim in comparison to our findings in this respect. Nonetheless, a few editing strategies can correspond to *expansion* such as adding new structures and rewriting or recombining pre-existing texts (Zeinolabedini & Gholami, 2016).

Relying on the interview data (Extracts B & C), we interpret the under-use of substitution in our study in two opposite ways. First, previously, *substitution* has been established as an important way of improving academic manuscripts in terms of language features. Zeinolabedini and Gholami (2016) contended that *substitution* acts as a general concept consisting of different linguistic changes such as paraphrasing and boosting. In the same vein, some scholars considered *substitution* changes as to be occurring mainly at word level (Flowerdew & Wang, 2016), which is much easier to implement. However, in the present study, the use of *substitution* is extended to genre-related revising practices in terms of the changes made to the move of RA sections. Thus, the writers in our study may have preferred to reformulate or expand the existing moves rather than to substitute one move with another. Secondly, we argue that *substitution* involves a different magnitude of changes and is basically a content-based revision type. In this study, we used students' term papers as our corpus, and they did not receive any expert feedback on the content of the papers similar to what they go through in submitting their papers to peer-reviewed journals or attending supervision meetings. As a result of the lack of content-based expert feedback, writers might feel uncertain to use *substitution* in revising their texts and therefore over-used other types of revising strategies such as *addition*, *reformulation*, and *expansion* which required fewer expert modifications. Extracts 3 and 4 provide tangible evidence in this regard. Therefore, one plausible justification for the over-employment of those three revising strategies by EAL graduate student writers can be presumably ascribed to their confidence in making such changes. In simpler terms, those three types of

revisions involve rhetorical and organizational changes to the moves in different sections of papers, which may foster a zone of comfort in students to add, reformulate, or expand their texts.

Our second research question addressed the distribution of genre-based revisions in different sections of the term papers. Interestingly, the three most commonly used changes stood out more in *discussion* (173 cases) and *introduction* (115 cases) sections, which is partially in line with the findings of Zeinolabedini and Gholami (2016) who reported a higher rate of non-genre revisions in these two sections. A plausible explanation one could provide for the disproportionate use of genre-based revisions in introduction and discussion is that, compared to other sections, these sections are expected to be larger in length and provide a well-organized and coherent expression of study background and discussion of findings in relation to wider literature, respectively. Thus, authoring these two sections seems to be a tougher and cognitively demanding task for writers in general and EAL scholars in particular (Bahrami, 2012; Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006; Swales & Feak, 2004). This reason may well explain authors' attempts to be highly expressive and include more argumentations in introduction and discussion sections (Hill, Soppelsa, & West, 1982; Nkemleke, 2014). Accordingly, in our study, in light of the increased genre literacy they gained throughout the instructional program, students may have decided to retouch those two sections for various possible reasons such as properly acknowledging and situating their research (Swales, 1990) and avoiding text similarity (Hu, 2015; Macdonald & Carroll, 2006).

Moreover, a more apparent explanation for the varying rates of genre-based revision strategies in different sections of RAs concerns the possible effect of the genre-based workshops. Presumably, other RA sections such as methods or results are more self-evident and procedural in nature, and students often possess the adequate knowledge to write those parts (Ahlstorm, 2017). However, introduction and discussion tend to be more normative and generic in nature. Having explicit knowledge of those normative practices appears to be more essential in aligning with the established frameworks in the field. Indeed, students' limited knowledge in writing the discussion section (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006) and EAL authors' less familiarity with established generic frameworks for RA sections, such as Swales' (2004) CARS model, as noted by Sheldon (2011), have already been reported. As the findings reveal, we see that gaining some explicit knowledge of genre-based frameworks throughout the program helped the participants in the present study to make a good number of genre-based revisions, most notably in the introduction and discussion sections of their term papers.

Another striking finding of the present study was related the underuse of genre-based strategies in the method section. In this respect, it can be posited that this section is mainly data-driven and acts as the only part where academic authors freely report their own study (Hill et al., 1982). More specifically, the content included in the method section is consistently recycled throughout the paper, and, therefore, writers hardly lend themselves to make modifications in this section during the revision process, compared to introduction or discussion sections which may warrant more changes.

## 6. Conclusion

The literature on other-initiated RA revisions has predominately dealt with language-oriented revisions (Willey & Tanimoto, 2012; Zeinolabedini & Gholami, 2016). In this study, the scope of such revisions was revisited by incorporating genre-based revision strategies. Graduate students in Applied Linguistics were asked to redraft their term papers after participating in a series of genre-based RA writing workshops, which was a pioneering intervention in Iranian EAP context. Accordingly, a good number of genre-based revisions were made on the earlier drafts of the term papers.

While consulting the previous categorization on revisions, we heuristically developed a strategy taxonomy based on their revisions and the literature and found *expansion*, *reformulation*, and *addition* as the most frequently employed genre-specific strategies in the papers. The identified strategies have mostly been applied in revising discussion and introduction sections of the term papers. To our knowledge, this taxonomy is the first attempt to delineate genre-oriented revision strategies in RA writing, and no strong claims can be made as to its possible transferability.

This study has shown that, broadly speaking, RA genre literacy can be of great relevance in addressing graduate students' needs and wants for academic writing and scholarly publishing. The findings of the present study could help graduate student and novice writers to redraft their manuscripts in light of move-step lenses in applied linguistics. Moreover, this study calls for the incorporation of genre-based aspects into RA revision instruction which could become an integral part of ERPP courses. Given the findings, we believe that a working knowledge of genre-based revision strategies can empower RA authors to make more informed choices as far as the adherence to genre theories and frameworks in crafting and revising RAs is concerned. In addition, the emerged genre-based revision strategy set could provide insights to English for Academic Purposes and ERPP material developers in devising revision-based materials and instructional activities.

In conducting this study, there were some limitations to note. Our data was limited to a small corpus of earlier and revised term projects authored by Iranian graduate students, and no expert feedback was offered to writers in the process of revisions in terms of content and organization. Further studies could extend the scope of the genre-based revision investigate genre-based revisions authors make on their manuscripts as a result of round(s) of expert feedback they keep receiving from journal editors/reviewers or similar figures in the course of their publication journeys. Drawing upon our study as a baseline, future researchers may compare first and published drafts of RAs to account for the changes where authors are expected and required to align their manuscripts with genre-based academic standards of credible journals.

## Note

1. The citations on the excerpts taken from the corpora of the study denote in-text citations originally used by the graduate students of the present study in crafting their term paper projects, and, therefore, are not included in the list of the references.

## Funding and source info

This study is part of a larger reasearch project as the PhD dissertation project for Ms. Mahsa Alinasab under the supervision of Javad Gholami and Zhila Mohammadnia at Urmia University.

## Author Statement

This study is drawn out of the PhD dissertation of Ms. Mahsa Alinasab (First Author), PhD candidate at the Department of English, Urmia University under the supervision of Javad Gholami (Second and Corresponding Author) (Lead Supervisor) and Zhila Mohammadnia (Third Author) (Second Supervisor).

**Javad and Zhila:** Conceptualization and Design, Study Context Selection, Genre-based Writing Program Material and Task development; **Mahsa:** Review of the literature, Material selection and compilation of genre-based tasks and assignments, holding workshops, provision of feedback to participants in constant consultation and briefing with the supervisors; **Javad, Zhila, and Mahsa:** Data analysis and coding, data categorization and crafting, redrafting, and proofreading the manuscript

## Declaration of competing interest

None to declare.

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